The Fighting Chance.

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS.

Presently he said: "Do you know anybody who can deliver you any considerable block of Amalgamated Electric at the market figures?"

"I could deliver you several blocks, if you care to bid," said Plank bluntly.

Belwether grew red, then pale. Quarrier stiffened in his chair, but his eyes were only skeptical. Plank's under lip had begun to protrude again. He swung his massive head, looking from Belwether back to Quarrier.

"I could deliver you several bl cks if you care to bid," said Plank bluntly.

"Pool or no pool," he continued, "you Amalgamated people will want to see the stock climb back into the branches from which somebody shook it out, and I propose to put it there. That is all I had meant to say to you, Mr. Quarrier. I'm not averse to saying it here to you, and I do. There's no secrecy about it. Figure it out for yourself how much stock I control and who let it go. Settle your family questions and put your house in order, then invite me to call and I'll do it. And I have an idea that we are going to stand on our own legs again and recover our self respect and our fighting capacity, and I rather think we'll stop this holdup business and that our Intercounty friend will let go the sand bag and pocket the jimmy and talk business across the line fence."

Quarrier's characteristic pallor was no index to his feelings, nor was his icy reticence. All hell might be boiling below.

When anybody gave Quarrier a letter to read he took a long time reading it, but if he was slow he was also minute. He went over every word again and again, studying, absorbing each letter, each period, the conformation of every word. And when he ended he had in his brain a photograph of the letter which he would never forget.

And now, slowly, minutely, methodically, he was going over and over Plank's words, and his manner of saying them, and their import, and the hidden one, if any.

If Plank had spoken the truth—and there was no reason to doubt it—Plank had quietly acquired a controlling interest in Amalgamated Electric. That meant treachery in somebody. Who? Probably Siward, perhaps Belwether. He would not look at the latter just yet; not for a minute or two. There was time enough to see through that withered, pink and white old fraud. But why had Plank done this? And why did Plank suspect him of any desire to wreck his own property? He did suspect him, that was certain.

After a silence he spoke quietly and without emotion:

"Everybody concerned will be glad to see Amalgamated Electric declaring dividends. This is a shock to us," he glanced impassively at the shrunken major, "but a pleasant shock. I think it well to arrange a meeting as soon as possible."

"Tomorrow," said Plank, with a manner of closing discussion. And in his brusque ending of the matter Quarrier detected the ringing undertone of an authority he never had and never would endure. If Plank suspected him, he must also suspect him of complicity in the Intercounty grab. He must suspect him of the ruthless crushing power that corrupts or annihilates opposition, making a mockery of legislation, a jest of the courts and an epigram of a people's indignation.

As Quarrier sat there meditating, his long white fingers caressing his soft, pointed beard, Sylvia came in, greeting the men collectively with a nod and offering her hand to Plank.

"Dinner is announced," she said. "Please go in farm fashion. Wait!" as Plank, following the major and Quarrier, stood aside for her to pass. "No, you go ahead, Howard, and you," to the major.

Left for a moment in the room with Plank, she stood listening to the others descending the stairs, then:

"Have you seen Mr. Siward?"

"Yes," said Plank.

"Oh! Is he well?"

"Not very."

"Is he well enough to read a letter and to answer one?"

"Oh, yes; he's well enough in that way."

"I supposed so. That is why I said to you, over the wire, not to trouble him with my request."

"You mean that I am not to say anything about your offer to buy the hunter?"

"No. If I make up my mind that I want the horse I'll write him—perhaps."

Lingering still, she let one hand fall on the banisters, turning back toward Plank, who was following.

"I understood you to mean that—that Mr. Siward's financial affairs were anything but satisfactory?"—the sweet, trailing, upward inflection making it a question.

"When did I say that?" demanded Plank.

"Once—a month ago."

"I didn't," said Plank bluntly.

"Oh, I had inferred it, then, from something you said or something you were silent about. Is that it?"

"I don't know."

"Am I quite wrong then?" she asked, looking him in the eyes.

And Plank, who never lied, found no answer. Considering him for a moment in silence, she turned again and descended the stairs.

The dinner was one of those thoroughly well chosen dinners of few courses and faultless service suitable for card players, who neither care to taxe themselves as a preliminary to a battle royal nor to dawdle through hours, eliminating for themselves what is not good for them. The men drank a light, sound, aromatic Irish of the major's; the women—except Marion, who took what the men took—used claret sparingly. Coffee was served where they sat; the men smoking, Agatha and Marion producing their own cigarettes.

"Good people, if you are ready we will go through the ceremony of cutting for partners—unless otherwise you decide. How say you?" said Sylvia.

"I don't care to enter the scramble for a man," cried Grace. "If it's to choose, I'd as soon choose Marion."

Plank looked at Leila, who laughed.

"All right; choose, then," said Sylvia. "Howard, you're dying, of course, to play with me, but you're looking very guiltily at Agatha."

The major asked Leila at once, so Plank fell to Sylvia, pitted against Marion and Grace Ferrall.

A few moments later the quiet of the library was broken by the butler entering with decanters and ice and glasses that tinkled frostily.

Play began at table No. 1 on a passed make of no trumps by Sylvia, and at the other table on a doubled and redoubled heart make, which sent a delicate flush into Agatha's face and drove the last vestige of lingering thoughtfulness from Quarrier's, leaving it a tense, pallid and expressionless mask, out of which looked the velvet fringed eyes of a woman.

Of all the faces there at the two tables Sylvia's alone had not changed, neither assuming the gambler's mask nor the infatuated glare of the amateur. She was thoughtful, excited, delighted or dismayed by turns, but always wholesomely so, the game for its own sake and not the stakes absorbing her, partly because she had never permitted herself to weigh money and pleasure in the same balance, but kept a mental pair of scales for each.

As usual, the fever of gain was fiercest in those who could afford to lose most. Quarrier, playing to rule with merciless precision, coldly exacted every penalty that a lapse in his opponents permitted. Agatha, her teeth set in her nether lip, her eyes like living jewels, answered Quarrier's every signal, interpreted every sign, her play fitting in exactly with his, as though she were his subconscious self balancing the perfectly adjusted mechanism of his body and mind.

Now and then lifting her eyes she sent a long, limpid glance at Quarrier like a pale shaft of light, and under his heavy fringed lashes at moments his level gaze encountered hers with a slow narrowing of lids—as though there was more than one game in progress, more than one stake being played for under the dull rose glow of the clustered lights.

The collar of diamonds and aquamarines shimmered like the reflection of shadowy lightning across her throat. A single splendid jewel glowed on her left hand as her fingers flashed among the cards for the makeup.

"A hundred aces," broke in Plank's heavy voice as he played the last trick and picked up the scoring card and pencil.

Once Marion, overintent, touched a card in the dummy when she should have played from her own hand, and Sylvia would have let it pass had not Plank calmly noted the penalty.

"Oh, dear! It's too much like business," sighed Sylvia. "Can't we play for the sake of the sport? I don't think it good sportsmanship to profit by a blunder."

"Rule," observed Marion laconically. "'Ware barbed wire if you want the brush."

"I myself never was crazy for the brush," murmured Sylvia.

Grace whispered maliciously, "But you've got it, with the mask and pads," and her mischievous head barely tipped backward in the direction of Quarrier.

"Especially the mask," returned Sylvia under her breath and laid on the table the last card of a Yarborough.

Toward midnight Sylvia, absorbed in her dummy, fancied she heard the electric bell ringing at the front door. Later, having barely made the add, she was turning to look at the major when, beyond him, she saw Leroy Mortimer enter the room, sullen, pasty skinned, but perfectly sober and well groomed.

"You are a trifle late," observed Sylvia carelessly. Grace Ferrall and Marion ignored him. Plank bade him good evening in a low voice.

The people at the other table, having completed their rubber, looked around at Mortimer in disagreeable surprise.

"I'll cut in if you want me. If you don't, say so," observed Mortimer.

It was plain that they did not, so he settled himself in an armchair with an ugly glance at his wife and an insolent one at Quarrier, and the game went on in silence, Leila and the major still losing heavily under the sneering gaze of Mortimer.

At last, "Who's carrying you?" he broke out, exasperated, and in the shocked silence Leila, very white, made a movement to rise, but Quarrier laid his long finger across her arm, pressing her backward.

"You don't know what you're saying," he remarked, looking coldly at Mortimer.

Plank laid down his cards, rose and walked over to Mortimer.

"May I have a word with you?" he asked bluntly.

"You may. And I'll help myself to a word or two with you," retorted Mortimer, following Plank out of the room, down the stairs to the lighted reception room, where they wheeled, confronting one another.

"What is the matter?" demanded Plank. "At the club they told me you were asleep in the card room. I didn't tell Leila. What is wrong?"

"I'm—I'm dead broke," said Mortimer harshly. "Billy Fleetwood took my paper. Can you help me out? It's due tomorrow."

Plank looked at him gravely, but made no answer.

"Can you?" repeated Mortimer violently. "Haven't I done enough for you? Haven't I done enough for everybody? Is anybody going to show me any consideration? Look at Quarrier's manner to me just now! And this very day I did him a service that all his millions can't repay. And there you stand, too, staring at me as though I were some importuning shabby genteel hanger-on, waiting for an opening to touch you. Yes, you do! And this very day I have done for you the—the most vital thing—the most sacred favor one man can do for another"—

He halted, stammered something incoherent, his battered eyes wet with tears. The man was a wreck—nerves, stamina, mind on the very verge of collapse.

"I'll help you, of course," said Plank, eying him. "Go home now and sleep. I tell you I'll help you in the morning. Don't give way. Have you no grit? Pull up sharp, I tell you!"

But Mortimer had fallen into a chair, his ravaged face cradled in his hands. He began to ramble and even to laugh weakly, passing his puffy, shaking hands across his eyes.

"It's good of you, Beverly. I appreciate it. But I've been good to you. You're all to the good, my boy! Understand? All to the good. I fixed it. I did it for you. You can have your innings now. You can have her when you want her, I tell you."

"What do you mean?" said Plank menacingly.

"Mean! I mean what I told you that day at Black Falls, when we were riding. I told you you had a chance to win out. Now the chance has come—same's I told you. Start in, and by the time you're ready to say 'When?' she'll be there with the bottle."

"I don't think you are perfectly sane yet," said Plank slowly.

"Let it go at that, then," sniggered Mortimer, struggling to his feet. "Bring Leila back. I'm all in. I'm going home. You'll be around in the morning. Won't you?"

"Yes," said Plank. "Have you got a cab?"

Mortimer had one. The glass and iron doors clanged behind him, and Plank, waiting a moment, sighed, raised his head and, encountering the curious gaze of a servant, trudged off upstairs again.

The game had ended at both tables. Quarrier and Agatha stood by the window together, conversing in low voices. Belwether, at a desk, sat muttering and fussing with a check book. The others were in Sylvia's apartments.

A few moments later Kemp Ferrall arrived in the best of spirits, very much inclined to consider the night as still young, but his enthusiasm met with no response, and presently he departed with his wife and Marion in their big car.

Leila, in her wraps, emerged in a few moments, looking at Plank out of serious eyes, and they made their brief adieus and went away in Plank's brougham.

When Agatha's maid arrived Quarrier also started to take his leave, but Sylvia, seated at a card table, idly arranging the cards in geometrical designs and fanciful arabesques, looked up at him, saying:

"I wanted to say something to you, Howard."

Agatha passed them, going into Sylvia's room for her wraps, and Quarrier turned to Sylvia.

"Well?" he said, with the slightest hint of impatience.

"Can't you stay a minute?" asked Sylvia, surprised.

"Agatha is going in the motor with me. Is it anything important?"

She considered him without replying. She had never before detected that manner, that hardness in a voice always so even in quality.

"What is it?" he repeated.

She thought a moment, putting aside for the time his manner, which she could not comprehend. Then:

"I wanted to ask you a question—a rather ignorant one perhaps. It's about your Amalgamated Electric company. May I ask it, Howard?"

After a second's stare, "Certainly," he said.

"It's only this: If the other people—the Intercounty, I mean—are slowly ruining Amalgamated, why don't you stop it?"

Quarrier's eyes narrowed. "Oh! And who have you been discussing the matter with?"

"Mr. Plank," she said simply. "I asked him. He shook his head and said I'd better ask you. And I do ask you."

For a moment he stood mute. Then his lips began to shrink back over his beautiful teeth in one of his rare laughs.

"I'll be very glad to explain it some day," he said, but there was no mirth in his voice or eyes, only the snickering lip wrinkling the pallor.

"Will you not answer now?" she asked.

"No, not now. But I desire you to understand it some day—some day before November. And one or two other matters that it is necessary for you to understand. I want to explain them, Sylvia, in such a manner that you will never be likely to forget them. And I mean to. For they are never out of my mind, and I wish them to be as ineffaceably impressed on yours. Good night."

He took her limp hand almost briskly, released it and stepped down the stairs as Agatha entered, cloaked, to say good night.

They kissed at parting—"life embracing death"—as Mortimer had sneered on a similar occasion. Then Sylvia, alone, stood in her bedroom, hands linked behind her, her lovely head bent, groping with the very ghosts of thought which eluded her, fleeing, vanishing, reappearing, to peep out at her only to fade into nothing ere she could follow where they flitted through the dark labyrinths of memory.

The major, craning his neck in the bay window, saw Agatha and Quarrier enter the big yellow motor and disappear behind the limousine. And it worried him horribly, because he knew perfectly well that Quarrier had lied to him about a jeweled collar precisely like the collar worn by Agatha Caithness, and what to do or say to anybody on the subject was for the first time in his life utterly beyond his garrulous ability.

Another matter. He had violated his word and had been caught at it by his prospective nephew-in-law—broken his pledged word not to sell his Amalgamated Electric holdings, and had done it. Yet how could Plank dominate unless another also had done what he had done? And it made him a little more comfortable to know he was sharing the fault with somebody—probably with Siward, whom he now had the luxury of despising for the very thing he himself had done.

"Drunkard!" he muttered to himself. "He's in the gutter at last!"

And he repeated it unctuously, almost recognized in his own self-loathing, because it was the first time, so far as he knew, that a Belwether might legitimately enjoy the pleasures of holding the word of a Siward in contempt.

Sylvia had dismissed her maid, the old feeling of distaste for the touch of another had returned since the last mad, crushed embrace in Siward's arms had become a memory. Now, blue eyes dreaming under the bright masses of her loosened hair, she sat watching the last glimmer amid the ashes whitening on the hearth, thinking of Siward and of what had been between them and of what could never be—never, never be!

One red spark among the ashes—her ambition, deathless amid the ashes of life! When that, too, went out life must be extinct.

What he had roused in her had died when he went away. It could never awake again unless he returned to awaken it. And he never would. He would never come again.

One brief interlude of love, of passion, in her life could neither tint nor taint the cool, normal sequence of her days. All that life held for a woman of her caste—all save that—was hers when she stretched out her hand for it—hers by right of succession, of descent; hers by warrant unquestioned, by the unuttered text of the ukase to be launched if necessary, by that very, very old lady, drowsing, enthroned, as the endless pageant wound like a jeweled river at her feet.

So Siward could never come again, sauntering toward her through the sunlight, smiling his absent smile. She caught her breath painfully, straightening up. A single ash fell in the fire. The last spark went out.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

EARLY NEW YORK.

Its Name In the Year 1664 Was the "Towne of Mannados."

While many persons are aware of the fact that New York has not always been so called, having for a time at least been known as New Amsterdam, probably not one in 10,000 is aware of the fact that in early days it possessed still another and now forgotten name—the Towne of Mannados. That this was the case, however, is shown beyond the shadow of a doubt by a map which hangs in the armory of the Old Guard of the city of New York among its collection of early Americana, the authenticity of which is certified to by the manuscript department of the British museum, in whose possession is the original from which the copy in the possession of the Old Guard was made.

As a quaint representation of early geographical ideas of what is now Greater New York the map in question is interesting. It is one of the very few on which the name of Towne of Mannados is given priority over that of New Amsterdam.

The facsimile which hangs in the Old Guard armory, certified as being a correct copy in every particular, is entitled "A Description of the Towne of Mannados, or New Amsterdam, as It Was in September, 1664." If, however, the "towne" at that time existed in the shape indicated by the plan, extremely violent earthquakes must have occurred since. The map, a curious illustration of early ideas of geography, shows New York, or, rather, the Towne of Mannados, as a peninsula, jutting into an inclosed bay formed by "Hudson river" on one side and an unnamed stream on the other, probably regarded as its continuation. To the west lies an unexplored territory designated as the "maine land" and to the east "Longe Isleland."

What is probably Staten Island is depicted as lying due west of what is today Wall street, and the only outlet from the inclosed bay into which the Towne of Mannados juts is a single extremely narrow pass between the "maine land" and "Longe Isleland," which almost meet at a point in the vicinity of what is now Sandy Hook. On either side of this passage is the descriptive title "Heads."

That, in brief, was the idea of the Towne of Mannados in 1664. The plan also shows a spot marked "Water Mill" at the mouth of a stream which is probably the Harlem river, while "Ye Governour's House" is located at the extreme southeastern part of the island. The territory, which was even vaguely mapped, hardly extends above what is now Twenty-third street. Beyond that on the "plan" there lies a vague territory much used by early geographers.—New York Times.

Sticking on and Sticking In.

His mother was proud of him, and with reason. He had just won a prize in Sunday school, and his teacher in the public school had reported him the best boy in her class. Consequently Mrs. Buggins felt a moral joy in discussing with him that evening at supper the evil character of the other boys of the neighborhood.

"And I wouldn't go about any more with Charlie Binks if I were you, Tommy," she concluded. "I was told this morning that he was seen sticking pins into his little sister's pug dog. But, of course, I know you wouldn't do such a thing."

"Tommy's virtuous eyes shone with the calm realization of his ethical superiority to the Binks boy.

"No, mother," he answered, "of course I wouldn't."

"But," broke in his father, "I heard that you were there at the time Charlie was sticking in the pins. You should have struck him, my lad."

For a moment Tommy's face fell, but he soon justified himself.

"I couldn't stop him, father," he explained. "You see, I was holding the dog."—London Scraps.

A Hopeless Pessimist.

At a gathering of men and women each one in turn was called upon to cite the attribute he or she considered of greatest worth in the formation of character, each attribute to be followed by the name of some one who best embodied it. For instance, a man gave sterling integrity and as his example Abraham Lincoln; a woman, tact, with Mme. de Maintenon as illustration; another woman, loyalty, adding the name of George Washington. At last it came the turn of a very plain spoken woman, who in loud, clear tones cried, "Honesty, and I know of no example, either living or dead!"